

Symbolism of Hair and Beard in the Vedic Rituals

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1. Introduction

Even when cut, shaved or pulled out, one's hair continues to grow as long one lives. The hair has been regarded as an emblem of vital energy since ancient times all over the world. In ancient India, the symbolical treatment of hairs on head, face (i.e. beard) and body has developed into an essential component of religious and social ceremonies, the analysis of which offers important clues to elucidate ritual structures and the thoughts underlying them.

The author has engaged more than 20 years in philological investigation of the symbolism of hair and beard in ancient Indian religious life, from Brahmanism to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. This paper aims to present a brief sketch of this study, focused on the Vedic rituals.

2. Keeping long hair and beard

2.1. Letting one's hair, beard and nails grow long means storing vitality inside oneself, just as sexual abstinence (*brāhmacarya*-) stores one's reproductive potential and asceticism in general (*tāpas*-) does one's own internal heat (*tapya-te* 'heat oneself, practice asceticism'); such storing is considered to bring forth superhuman or magical power. The same applies also to the dirt on the skin. Letting one's hair, beard and nails grow long without cutting them as well as keeping one's skin dirty without bathing have been recognized as characteristic of those provided with preternatural power, namely gods, demons or human beings who practice special religious acts such as Ṛṣi, Muni, Dīkṣita, Tāpasa, Sattrin and Brahmacārin. Long grown hair may be let hang down, uncombed, in a natural way, but also may be arranged in a particular style (braid, topknot, etc.)

2.2. The combination of long hair and beard with extraordinary ability is found as early as the Ṛgveda (RV) and the Atharvaveda (AV). For example, Rudra (RV I 114,1.5), Pūṣan (VI 55,2, IX 67,11) and the Vasiṣṭhas (VII 33,1; 83,8) are *kapardīn*- 'characterized by a topknot (*kaparda*-) braided in snail-form'. A long beard is worn by Pūṣan (RV X 26,7), Indra (VIII 33,6; X 105,1), Brahmacārin equated with Dīkṣita (AV XI 5,6 → 3.5.), the Vrātyas (AV XV 2,1), etc. The designation *keśin*- 'characterized by long hair' is enigmatically applied to the triplet of the gods Sūrya, Vāyu and Agni (RV I 164,44), a mysterious transcendent being called also Muni (RV X 136,1- 7), those who performed for the first time the Sattrā and brought out the sun to the worlds (AV-P II 52,1 ≈ TB II 7,17,1: a Mantra for the Keśavapanīya →4.6.), an Asura harming embryos (AV VIII 6,5), etc. The close relation between the Keśin and the sun (sunlight) is noteworthy, e.g:

RV X 136 1. *keśy āgnīm keśī viśām | keśī bibharti ródasī | keśī víśvam sāvār dṛśé | keśídām jyótir ucyate ||*
2. *múnayo vātaraśanāḥ | piśāṅgā vasate mālā | vātasyānu dhrāḥjīm yanti | yád devāso ávikṣata ||*

1. The Keśin (sg.) [holds] fire, the Keśin [holds] poison, the Keśin holds earth and heaven; the Keśin [holds] each sunlight in order to see, the Keśin is called this light here [on earth].

2. Those in a trance (pl. *mūni-*) who have wind as their reins (*vāta-raśana-*) wear brown dirty (as their garment); they go along the course of wind, when the gods have entered [them].

AV-P II 52,1 ≈ TB II 7,17,1 (Mantra for the Keśavapanīya → 4.6.)

*ye keśinaḥ prathamās sattram +āsata | yebhir ābhṛtaṃ yad idaṃ virocate |
tebhyo juhomi haviṣā ghṛtenā- | aśvavān gomān ayam astu vīraḥ ||*

Those Keśins ('characterized by long hair') who sat (i.e. performed) for the first time the Sattra and by whom this which shines here (i.e. the sun) was brought out, to them I do offering with butteroil as oblation. Let this one here (Yajamāna) be a hero rich in horses, rich in cows.

3. Removal of hair and beard

3.1. Meaning of shaving/cutting hair, beard and nail as well as bathing

As a counterpart of keeping hair grown long, the removal of hair signifies depriving vital power, which leads to death, as in the case of Samson in the Old Testament. This is a natural way of thinking, but the matter is more complicated in ancient India. The hair has two aspects, that which is living and that which is dying.

Seen biologically, hair and nails are tissues differentiated from the epidermis, the outer layer of skin; these tissues are renewed according to their own cycle. In this renewal process, living and growing is nothing but decaying and dying. Grown hair, beard and nails are, as it were, dead parts of a body, which are dirty and impure. The removal of them was required, not only for sanitary reasons, but also for religious purification (→ 4.2.). Furthermore this is usually accompanied by bathing (i.e. washing away dirt), anointing and changing clothes. By this means, one symbolically abandons the old dead body belonging to the past life and, having become an unsullied embryo, prepares for rebirth in a new life. This underlies the fundamental notion of Indian thoughts that what once exists does not disappear, but only changes its place and form. Death is not annihilation, but transfer from one state of being to another in the endless renewal cycle. A series of acts — shaving, cutting, bathing and changing clothes — symbolizes death in this sense.

3.2. Removal of hair and beard at the transition of the state of being

From this viewpoint, ceremonial removal of hair and beard at the transition of life stages is easy to understand. At the funeral, the dead has his hair and beard shaved and nails trimmed before cremation; this prepares for his rebirth in a heavenly world to which his crematory fire shall bring him (cf. JB I 47 ~ ŚB XII 5,2; BaudhPitṛmS I 2; HirPitṛmS I 1; ĀpŚS XXXI 1,17, etc.). At the start of each stage of human life, hair and beard are treated ceremonially and constitute initiation rites prescribed in the Gṛhyasūtras, e.g. *cūḍākarmaṇ-/cūḍākaraṇa-* 'the first hair shaving or cutting for making a hair-knot of a child', *godāna-/keśānta-* 'the first beard shaving of an adolescent'. However, shaving accompanied by bathing at the Upanayana and the Samāvartana of a Brahmacārin is considered to belong originally to the pattern of the Dīkṣita, as discussed below 4.

3.3. Periodical removal of hair or beard according to the cosmic cycle

Periodical removal of hair or beard according to the cosmic cycle such as year, season, month or half-month seems to come to existence in very ancient times. This has been integrated in the Iṣṭi type of Śrauta rituals. What does it mean?

Nature repeats various periodic changes but continues to exist. The sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, the stars rotate in a year; they all repeat, as it were, their death and rebirth in permanent circulation according to their cycles. This eternity of existence is what people pursue by the rituals. This eternal periodicity is the original meaning of *ṛtá-* (nt.) ‘the cosmic order which regulates both nature and human life’. Another important concept from the same root **h₂er* ‘to fit in precisely’ is *ṛtú-* (masc.) ‘the right time in exact accordance with the temporal cycle’, which means above all ‘monthly period fit for conception of children by women’ and more generally ‘season’.

Now, the Iṣṭi rituals consist of offering of vegetal food or dairy product. These both come from agriculture and pasturage and depend on ‘the regularity of periodic changes of nature’, namely *ṛtá-*. Periodical shaving aims to accord the cycle of human activities with the cosmic cycle; this shall bring forth a long life, a good harvest and birth of cattle and descendants. This thought appears most clearly in the Nivartana of the Cāturmāsya.

3.4. The verb and tool for removal of hair and beard

The verb *váp-a-ti* (/te) ‘cut at (close to) the base, near the root, shave’ is exclusively used for hair and beard; med. *váp-a-te* means usually ‘shave/cut one’s own hair/beard’ (exceptionally ‘for/by oneself’ RV I 164,44 → 3.5.). The tool is *kṣurá-* ‘razor (metal)’, often compared to field burning fire and to *vájra-* (Indra’s shooting weapon, equated with thunderbolt). *váptṛ-* ‘specialist of shaving, barber’ appears from the RV onward (→3.5. RV X 142,4; cf. *vaptṛ-* ‘one who shaves’ TB I 5,6,3 → 3.9.); it is later replaced by *nápita-* (ŚB+; → 4.2.1. ŚB III 1,2,2).

3.5. Shaving hair and beard in the RV

Shaving hair and beard on the skin is often compared with burning off plants on the earth, especially the annual burning of fields, and combined with the cosmic cycle (*ṛtú-*).

RV I 164,44 *trāyaḥ keśína ṛtuthá ví cakṣate*¹ *saṃvatsaré vapata éka eṣám* |
*vísvam éko abhi caṣṭe śácībhir*¹ *dhṛājir ékasya dadṛṣe ná rūpám* ||

‘Three Keśins (‘those characterized by long hair’) look over [the worlds] according to cosmic cycle (*ṛtú-*). The (first) one of these shaves himself (Agni burns out plants and his hairs, i.e. flames, go out: reflex. med.; or, shaves the earth for/by himself: affect. med.; *vapate* → 3.4.) when a full year passes (*saṃvatsaré*). The (second) one looks over everything with [his] ability. Swift gliding of the (third) one is seen, but not [its] form.’

In this enigma hymn, the three Keśins are considered to be Agni, Sūrya and Vāyu (→2.2.).

RV X 142,4 cd *yadā te vāto anuvāti śocir*¹ *vápteva śmáśru vapasi prá bhūma* || ‘As soon as (or: Each time when) the wind blows along your flame, you (Agni) begins to shave beard of the earth like a **barber** (*váptṛ-*).’

The fire burning off plants on the earth is not only wildfire, but also and more frequently, the fire artificially set to the fields and forests for cultivation and settlement. Burning bush in winter or early spring has developed into an annual rite of divining the harvest of the coming year on the day of Ekāṣṭakā, integrated into the dīkṣā of the Sattra. The association of shaving hair and beard by a razor with burning plants by fire appears in the mantras for the Keśavapanīya (→ 4.3.).

3.6. Shaving hair or bead in the AV

In the AV there are stanzas which treat directly shaving hair or bead; they serve as mantras for various rituals. The AV-Śaunaka VI 68 (1–3 ≈ AV-Paippalāda XIX 17,13-15 in different verse order) describes mythical shaving of King Soma, which implies waxing and waning of the moon and might suggest the custom of shaving at the new and full moon (→ 3.7.). The three stanzas are used as mantra for Cūḍākarma, Godāna and Upanayana; the 3rd (AV-Ś VI 68,3 ≈ AV-P XIX 17,14; AV-P II 52, 1. 3 ~ TB II 7,17,2) for the Keśavapanīya of Rājasūya.

1. *ā-_uyám agant savitā kṣurēṇa-_u śnéna vāyo udakéné-_{é(ā) i}hi /
āḍityā rudrā vásava undantu śacetasaḥ_ḥ śomasya rājño vapata prācetasah_ḥ //*

Here Savitṛ has come with a razor. Come, Vāyu, with hot water! Let the Ādityas, the Rudras, the Vasus moisten [the hair and beard] with one accord! Do ye (gods) shave with precaution [hair and beard] of King Soma!

2. *āditiḥ śmāśru vapat_uv_u āpa undantu vārcasā_ḥ cikitsatu prajāpatir_ḥ dīrghāyutvāya cákṣase //*

Let Aditi shave the beard! Let the waters (āpas f.pl.) moisten [it] with efficacy! Let Prajāpati cure [the shaved one] in order to see that [this one] has a long life.

3. *yén_a āvapat savitā kṣurēṇa śomasya rājño vāruṇasya vidvān_ḥ /
téna brahmāṇo vapate_{dám} asyá_ḥ gómān áśvavān ayám astu prajāvān //*

By which razor Savitṛ, knowing [(the secret meaning of) shaving] shaved [hair and beard] of King Soma, of [King] Varuṇa, by that (razor), o Brahmins, shave this (hair and beard: nt.sg. *keśaśmaśrú-*) of this one here!

Let this one be rich in cows, rich in horses, rich in descendents!

The second stanza reveals that shaving was a dangerous act that may hurt the skin and threaten health and life.

3.7. Shaving hair and beard in the new and full moon sacrifice

The new and full moon sacrifice (Darśapūrṇamasa: du./sg.), the basic pattern of Iṣṭi rituals, is obligatory for the Āhitāgni who has settled his sacrificial fires. According to Śrautasūtras the Yajamāna shaves his hair and beard (by himself or makes a barber shave them) and bathes on the Upavasatha day. His shaving and bathing are, however, not mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas; the first occurrence is the Karmāntasūtra of the Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra XXIV 21, but only as optional acts imitating the Apsudīkṣā of the Soma sacrifice.

BaudhŚS XXIV 21 [Karmāntasūtra] *sa yadi keśaśmaśru vāpayiṣyamānaḥ syāt keśaśmaśru vāpayitvā lomāni samhṛtya nakhāni nikṣṇtayīta. snāyād. abhyañjītāñjīta. dīkṣāyai rūpaṃ kurvīta.* ‘If (yadi) there would be (syāt) an [Āhitāgni] who is going to get his hair and beard shaved, he should get his hair on the head and beard shaved, take off his hair on the body and get his nails cut. He should bathe. He should anoint his body. He should anoint his eyes. **He should follow the model of the Dīkṣā.**’

Obligatory shaving is prescribed in MānavaŚS I 4,1,2–4, ĀpŚS IV I 4f., BhāradvājaŚS IV 2, etc.:

MānŚS I 4,1,2–4 *keśaśmaśru yajamāno vāpayate dakṣiṇopakramāt keśān. /2/ savyopakramān nakhān adhātmaṃ kaniṣṭhikātaḥ kārayate. / na kaksau. /3/ patnī nakhāns ca kārayīta. /4/* ‘2. The Yajamāna gets his hair and beard shaved; **beginning from the right side**, [he gets his] hairs [shaved]. [He does] not [get] (two) armpits [shaved]. 3. He gets his nails done (i.e. cut), **beginning from the left side to himself, from [his left] little finger or toe**. 4. Also his wife should get her nails done [cut].’ (For order of shaving and cutting, cf. ŚB III 1,2,3f. Apsudīkṣā → 4.2.1).

Bhāradśś IV 2. *parvaṇi yajamānaḥ keśaśmaśru vāpayate*. ‘At the knot-times (i.e. at the new and full moons), Yajamāna gets his hair and beard shaved.’

Āpśś IV I 4. *parvaṇi ca keśaśmaśru vāpayate*. 5 *apy alpaśo lomāni vāpayata ity vājasaneyakam*. ‘4. And at the joint (of a month, i.e. at the new and full moons), [Yajamāna] gets his hair and beard shaved. 5. “Even a little, he gets shaved hairs on the body”: thus says [the Bāhmana] belonging to Vājasaneyin school.’ (No corresponding text is found; for shaving hairs on the body, cf. ŚB III 1,2,3 and Āpśś X 5,7 [Apsudīkṣā]→, TB I 5,6,1-2 [Cāturmāsya]→.)

In the Kātyāyanaśś, shaving becomes again optional and Śikhā ‘hairtuft on the headtop’ should be left unshaved, which reflects later tendency to avoid a completely hairless head.

Kātyśś II 1,9. *keśaśmaśru vapate vā ’śikhān*. ‘Or he shaves his hair and beard **except for Śikhā**.’

Ritual shaving on the Upavasatha day is supposed to have been secondarily taken from the Apsudīkṣā of the Soma sacrifice, although the custom of shaving on the new and full moon day could have come into existence in much older times, cf. the AV-Ś VI 68,1–3 (→ 3.6.).

3.8. Shaving in the Agnyādheya/Agnyādhāna

While the Iṣṭi rituals are in principle to be repeated periodically, the Agnyādheya “Setting up sacrificial fires” is the ritual that one performs only once in a lifetime. The Yajamāna’s shaving on the Upavasatha day of Agnyādheya marks his transfer from the state of an ordinary man (master of a family) to an Āhitāgni who is qualified for performing the Śrauta rituals. As in the case of the New and Full moon sacrifices, the shaving ceremony is not referred to in the Brāhmaṇas and appears for the first time in the Baudhśś II 8. The process of shaving, bathing, clothing, anointing eyes and purifying with Darbha grass is parallel to the Apsudīkṣā of the Soma sacrifice, but different in some important points: 1) Bathing is simplified. 2) The formulas are not found in the YV-Mantra collections. 3) The beginning of the formula for shaving is associated with that of the Apsudīkṣā and might have been transformed from this. 4) It takes place in an enclosure to the southern side of the sacrificial hall in contrast to the north in the case of the Apsudīkṣā.

It is to be assumed that the shaving ceremony was established as the Apsudīkṣā in the Soma sacrifice in the period of composition of the black YV Samhitās, both mantra and prose portions, and spread to the Iṣṭi rituals, first to the Agnyādheya, then to the Darśapūrṇamāsa, in the period in which the Śrautasūtras began to be composed.

Baudhśś II 8 ... *dakṣiṇata etat pariśritaṃ bhavati. tasyaitasmin pariśrite prāṇāvṛttasya keśāntaṃ karoti tūṣṇīm. trīṇi darbhapuñjālāny upaniyatya vapati* <*vape pravape devena savitrā prasūto brahmaṇā samśito ’haṃ. yāni ma ita ūrdhvaṃ lomāni tāni me svastaye santu*> *iti. athainam uptakeśaśmaśruṃ nikṛttanakham udakumbhenābhyavanayan vācayati* <*imā ma āpaḥ śivāḥ santu duṣkṛtaṃ pravahantu me | śuddhāḥ prayujīmahi kratūn*> *iti. snātaḥ prān utsṛpyāhatam vāsaḥ paridhāyālankṛtyāṅkte | athainam ekaviṃśatyā darbhapuñjālais tredhā vibhaktaiḥ saptabhiḥsaptabhis tūṣṇīm pavayitvā ...* ‘On the south (of the sacrificial hall) this enclosed place is prepared. At this enclosed place, [the priest] does silently the Keśānta ‘hair cutting rite’ of that (Yajamāna) turned towards the east. Having hold close (pressed) three bundle of Darbha grass, [the priest] shaves [Yajamāna’s hair and beard] saying ‘I shave my [hair and beard], I began to shave my [hair and beard], impelled by God Savitr and sharpened by sacred formula (*brāhmaṇ-* nt.). Those which [will be] my hairs

on the body (*lomāni*) hereafter, let them be for my welfare!’ Then, pouring down [water] by a water jar on [the Yajamāna] whose hair and beard are shaved and whose nails are cut, [the priest] makes him say: “let these waters here be auspicious for me! Let them bring away my misdeed! May we, purified, set our intentions (of the Sacrifice) in motion!” Bathed, having slipped out towards the east, having worn a new garment, having adorned himself, [the Yajamāna] anoint his eyes. Then [the priest] purifies him silently (without formulas) with 21 bundles of Darbha grass which are divided into three parts with seven each ...’

Much simpler is the prescription in ĀpŚS V 4,9: *keśaśmaśru vapate nakhāni nikṛntate snāti. evaṃ patnī keśavarjam*. ‘The [Yajamāna] shaves his hair and beard, cuts his nails, bathes himself. In the same way, his wife [does] except for [shaving] hair.’

3.9. Shaving in the Cāturmāsya

3.9.1. The Cāturmāsya, which continues a full year, is a complex ritual composed of originally independent popular festivals. Twelve lunar months are divided in three groups of four months, each of which begins with a parvan ‘joint (of the grasses)’ ceremony, i.e. Vaiśvadeva Parvan, Varuṇapraghṣāsa Parvan, Sākamedha Parvan. Secondly added is Śnāsīrīya Parvan in order to fill the gap between a solar and lunar year (i.e. the intercalary month *upamāsa*- or the 13th month). Each Parvan ceremony is followed by the Nivartana ‘making turn down’, a special type of hair cutting rite, after which begins observance of Antarāla-vratāni (or Cāturmāsya-vratāni → 3.9.4.) during four months.

It is noteworthy that the Cāturmāsya is closely tied to the agriculture. A year is treated as a grass with joints (*parvan*-) such as barley, rice and millet. The Nivartana symbolizes reaping crops as well as burning fields according to the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa and Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (→ 3.9.3.). The concrete manner of Nivartana is clear neither in the mantras nor in the brāhmanas and discussed by ancient Brahmin scholars (after the BaudhŚS onwards) as well as by modern scholars. From the context, we might assume that *nivartaya-ti/te* is a technical term for reaping the crops and signifies a series of acts: turning down grasses by the left hand, cutting down them by a knife held by the right hand, and collecting them once fallen down on the earth. The first act may express the whole process as in the case of *nir-vap* of the Iṣṭi and *ā-labh* of the Animal sacrifice.

The act of the Nivartana is explained in the main text of the BaudhŚS V 4 = 9 = 17 = 18 :

yajamānāyatana upaviśya treṇyā śalalyā lohītāyasasya ca kṣureṇa śīrṣaṇaṃ nī ca vartayate pari ca vapata.

‘Having sat down on the post of the Yajamāna, by means of a porcupine quill spotted in three places and a razor of red metal, on his head, [the Yajamāna] makes his [hairs] turn down and shave his [hairs] round.’

And further discussed in the Dvaidhasūtra of BaudhŚS XXI 2:

... *nivartana iti // nivartanenopavāpyobhayaṃ keśaśmaśru vāpayīte baidhāyanaḥ // nivartenopavāpya śmaśrūṇy eva vāpayīta na keśān iti śālīkiḥ // ivartanenopavāpya naiva śmaśrūṇi vāpayīta ne keśān ity aupamanyavaḥ //* ‘With regard to the Nivartana: Baidhāyana says that [Yajamāna] should get both his hair and beard shaved, after having got them nearly shaved (i.e. cut short: *upavāpya*) in the Nivartana manner. Śālīki says that [Yajamāna] should get only his beard shaved, not his hairs, after he has got them nearly shaved (i.e. cut short: *upavāpya*) in the Nivartana manner. Aupamanyava says that [Yajamāna] should get

neither his hairs, nor his beard shaved, after he has got them nearly shaved (i.e. cut short: *upavāpya*) in the Nivartana manner.’

3.9.2. The Nivartana rite is however not mentioned in both the black and white YV Samhitās. The mantras are found only in the TB^m (I 5,5,1-2). They emphasize the highest principle Ṛta and combine the Nivartana with Agni Vaiśvānara ‘fire belonging to everyone’, the fire which serves to burn off fields for cultivation (→ 3.5. ṚV I 164, etc.).

We cite, for example, the mantras for the Nivartana (TB^m I 5,5,1-2) in the Vaiśvadeva-parvan (the first stanza is proper to this parvan; the following stanzas are common to all the parvans):

***ṛtām** evā parameṣṭhī / **ṛtām** nātyeti kim canā / **ṛté** samudrā āhitaḥ / **ṛté** bhūmir iyām śritā //*

‘The very Ṛta is standing in the highest place/on the top. Nothing goes beyond Ṛta. The ocean is set on Ṛta. This earth here is resting on Ṛta.’

*agnis tigmeṇa śociṣā / tāpa ākrāntam uṣṇihā / śirās tāpasy āhitaḥ / **vaiśvānarasya** téjasā // ṛténāsyā nīvartaye / satyéna pārivartaye (1) / tāpasāsyānuvartaye / śivénāsyópavartaye / śagménāsyābhīvartaye / tād **ṛtām** tāt **satyām** / tād **vratām** tāt chakeyaḥ / téna śakeyaḥ téna rādhyāsam //*

‘Fire is provided with sharp flame. Heat is entered by the metre Uṣṇih. The head is placed in heat with radiance of Agni Vaiśvānara (‘fire belonging to everyone’). By the Ṛta of this [Viśvānara], I make my [hairs on the head] turn down (med. caus. *nīvartaye*). By the truth, I make them turn round (*pārivartaye*). By the heat of this, I make them turn along (i.e. follow: *ānuvartaye*). By the auspicious [heat] of this, I make them turn near (*úpavartaye*). By the strong [heat] of this, I make them turn towards (*abhīvartaye*). That is the Ṛta. That is the truth. That is the Vrata. May I be able [to do] that. May I be able by that. May I succeed by that.’

The first stanza of the mantras for Nivartana in the Sākamedha-parvan reads:

***yó asyāḥ prthivyās tvací / nīvartāyaty oṣadhīḥ / agnir īśāna ojasā / váruṇo dhītībhiḥ sahá /**
īndro marúdbhiḥ sákhībhiḥ sahá /*

‘[Agni] who makes plants turn down (i.e. burn out) on the skin of this earth; Agni is ruler with vital energy; Varuna together with thoughts; Indra together with [his] companions Maruts.’

3.9.3. The prose explanation of the Nivartana is found in TB^p I 5,6,1-7 and ŚB II 6,4,5-7. The latter seems to have been abbreviated from the former which gives a detailed account. The TB compares the order of shaving hair, beard and armpits among Devas, Asuras and Manu (→ 4.2. Apsudīkṣā ŚB III 1,2,3f.). The Cāturmāsya with four monthly Nivartana is interpreted as follows: 1) plucking out the grasses of the Yajamāna’s rival every four months, which causes his hunger and decay; 2) annual burning of the earth brings to the Yajamāna his prosperity with cattle and offspring. Yajamāna’s hair cutting by Nivartana is considered as Avadāna, a portion of oblation cut from his own body, cf. the Dīkṣita as *hāvis-* in the Soma sacrifice (→ 4.1.3.).

ŚB II 6,4,5-7 seems to have been abbreviated from the TB^p I 5,6,1-7. On the other hand, the ŚB II 5,1-6,4, the main part of the Cāturmāsya brāhmaṇa, gives a contradictory mention of shaving hair and beard: no shaving at the end of the Vaiśvadeva (II 5,1,1-22), shaving after the Avabhṛtha at the end of the Varuṇapraghāsa (II 5,2,46-48), shaving at the end of the Sākamedha (II 6,2,19), shaving all over the head (Parivartana) at the end of the Śunāsīrya (II 6,3,14-17).

The relation among the TB mantras, the TB prose and the two parts of the ŚB is so intricate that it is now difficult to draw a conclusion. Apparent is, however, peculiarity of the TB mantras, which stand much closer to the prose of the TB and ŚB than to other YV mantra-collections. Also the affinity between the TB and the ŚB is remarkable.

TB^p I 5,6,1-7 1. *devā vai yád yajñé 'kurvata / tād ásurā akurvata / té 'surā ūrdhvāṃ prṣṭhébhyo nāpaśyan / té késān āgre 'vapanta / átha śmáśrūni / áthopapakśáu / tátas té 'vāñca āyan / párá 'bhavan / yásyaivám vāpanti / ávāñ eti* // 2. *átho páraivā bhavati / átha devā ūrdhvāṃ prṣṭhébhyo 'paśyan / tá upapakśāv āgre 'vapanta / átha śmáśrūni / átha késān / tátas té 'bhavan / suvargám lokám āyan / yásyaivám vāpanti / bhávaty ātmánā / átho suvargám lokám eti* // 3. *áthaitán mánur vaptre mithunám apaśyat / sá śmáśrūny āgre 'vapata / áthopapakśáu / átha késān / táto vai sá prājāyata prajāyā paśúbhiḥ / yásyaievám vāpanti / prá prajāyā paśúbhir mithunáir jāyate / ... 5. yá evám vidvāns cātúrmāsyáir yájate / bhrátṛvyasyaivā māsó vṛktvá / śīrṣán ní ca vartáyate pári ca. / yáishā saṃvatsará (BS saṃvathsarē) upajīvā / vṛikté tām bhrátṛvyasya / kṣudhā 'sya bhrátṛvyaḥ párá bhavati / lohitāyaséna nívartayate / yád vā imām agnir rtāv āgate nívartayati / etád evāinān rūpām kṛtvā nívartayati / sá tátas śvásśvo bhūtyasī bhávanty eti* // 6. *prājāyate / yá evám vidvān lohitāyaséna nívartayate / etád evā rūpām kṛtvā nívartayate / sá tátas śvásśvo bhūtyān bhávann eti / práivā jāyate / treṇyā śalalyā nívartayeta. / tríṇi-trīṇivái devānām ṛddhāni / tríṇi cchándāmsi / tríṇi sávanāni / tráya imé lokāḥ* // 7. ... *yác cātúrmāsyayājy ātmano nāvadyet / devébhya āvṛscyeta / catṛṣú-catṛṣu māsēsu nívartayeta / parókṣam evá tád devébhya ātmánóvadyaty ánāvrasakāya / ...*

1. What the gods verily made at the sacrifice, Asuras made that. Those Asuras did not see upwards from [their] back. **They shaved first their hairs on the head, then beard, then armpits.** Therefore, they went downwards. They became lost/perished. When they shave someone's [hair, beard, and armpits] in this way, [this one] goes downwards. 2. And further, he perishes. Then, the gods saw upwards from [their] back. **They shaved first their armpits, then beards, then hairs on the head.** Therefore, they became well. They went to the heavenly world. When they shave someone's [hair, beard, and armpits] in this way, [this one] becomes well with his self [in the next world]. And that, he goes to the heavenly world. 3. Then, at that time, Manu saw (discovered) a paired one (*mithuná-*) for the shaver (*vapti-*). **He shaved first his beard, then armpits, then hairs on the head.** Therefore he verily propagated himself with offspring, with cattle. When they shave someone's [hair, beard, and armpits] in this way, [this one] propagates himself with offspring, with cattle, with pairing. ... 5. When [the Yajamāna], knowing thus, performs Cāturmāsyas (pl.) for himself, he wrenches off even [his] rival's four months [towards himself] and makes [his hairs] turn down and turn around on the head. That which is this livelihood (i.e. crops) in a year, he wrenches that of the rival off towards himself. By hunger, his rival perishes. He makes his [hairs] turn down by [a razor] made of red metal (i.e. copper). That Agni verily makes this [earth] turn down (i.e. burn off) after the season came, he, imitating this [phenomenon], makes this earth turn down (i.e. burn off) for himself. He (the Yajamāna) becomes therefore increasingly more abundant day by day. 6. [The Yajamāna] propagates himself. He propagates himself, who, knowing thus, makes his [hairs] turn down with a razor made of red metal (i.e. copper). He imitating verily this, makes his [hairs] turn down [as the result]. He becomes therefore increasingly more abundant day by day. He even propagates himself [as the result]. With porcupine quill spotted in three places, he should make his [hairs] turn down. ... 7. ... When the performer of the Cāturmāsyāni does not cut off [the portion for the gods] of himself, he would be handed over forcibly to the gods. After every four months, he should make [his hairs] turn down. In a hidden way, verily, he cut off [a portion for the gods] of himself [as the result]. [It serves] for not-being-handed over. ...

3.9.4. The first occurrence of the Antarāla-vratāni is the Antarāla-vratāni (or Cāturmāsya-vratāni) is the **Prāyaścittasūtra** of BaudhŚS (XXVIII 8), which suggests their later origin. During these Vratas for four months, hairs and beard must not be shaved. Removal of hair and beard and letting them grow alternate every four months during a year. This treatment of hair and beard has an ambiguous character: periodical shaving at the Parvan, as in the New and Full moon sacrifice, and the complex pattern discussed immediately below.

4. Complex pattern of removal and letting grow of hair and beard

4.1. Structure of the rituals and treatment of hair and beard

4.1.1. For the analysis of ritual structure, a complex pattern plays the most important role: shaving hair and beard at the opening and the closing of a religious performance and letting them grow during the time in between. This pattern is observed typically in the Soma sacrifice inclusive of the Sattrā as well as Veda study of the Brahmācārin and various kinds of asceticism. What is common to them is observance of respective Vrata ‘religious duty’, which consists in restraint of human activities based on instinctive desires such as eating, sleeping, speaking, sexual intercourse.

The first shaving (combined with bathing → 2.1., 3.1.), preceding the commencement of the Vrata, signifies the performer’s death in a secular life in order to lead him, through the intermediate stage of being an embryo, to his new birth in a sacred life (as one of the Gods, as the teacher’s son, etc.). While he observes his Vrata as a superhuman being, he lets his hair, beard and nails grow long (and refrains from bathing). The second shaving (with bathing), succeeding the release of the Vrata, represents the reverse process, i.e. transfer from a sacred state to a profane. The latter shaving has developed into an independent Soma sacrifice, the Keśavapanīya ‘hair-shaving rite’, a component of the Rājasūya.

4.1.2. Yajamāna as a host of the feast for the gods

The Śrauta rituals consists essentially of two elements: praising the gods by words, i.e. the original meaning of *yajñā-*, and offering them oblations, vegetable foods, dairy products, meat, Soma sap. The Yajamāna invites the gods to the sacrificial place, which is valid as a virtual world of the gods (→ 4.1.3.), and entertains them with delicious food and drink as well as praising hymns (Ṛc) and, in the Soma sacrifice, musical chant (Sāman). This is a sacred feast for the gods hold by the Yajamāna. Now, according to customary law in ancient tribal society, the host and the guests of a feast must of the same social rank. Therefore the Yajamāna has to transfer from a human being (Manu’s descendant: *mānuṣa-*) to a divine being. This transition occurs by his undertaking the Yajamāna’s Vrata at the beginning of the ritual and he turns back to a human being by releasing himself from it at the end of the ritual. In the Soma sacrifice, however, the concept of the Vrata is absorbed into that of Dīkṣā. The Yajamāna keeps his divinity as a Dīkṣita from the Dīkṣā till the Avabhṛtha.

4.1.3. Dīkṣā ‘consecration’: original meaning and development

dīkṣa^{te} (Br.+) is a desiderative of *dāś* (RV *dāṣṭi*, RV+ *dāśa-ti*) ‘offer, present’ and means in the reflex.med. ‘to desire to offer oneself (to the gods)’, hence ‘to consecrate oneself as oblation to the gods’. From this original meaning, it is quite natural that the Dīkṣita ‘consecrated one’ is treated as *hāvis-* ‘oblation’ or as an animal for sacrificial victim:

MS III 6,2:61,11-12 havír vái dīksitó. *yadā vái havír yájuṣā prokṣáty átha havír bhavati. yád yájuṣā snapáyati havír eváinam akar.*

The Dīksita is verily an oblation. Whenever (/As soon as) verily an [object for] oblation is sprinkled with water with Yajus, it becomes an oblation. When [the priest] makes [the Yajamāna] bathe with Yajus, he has made this one (Yajamāna) even to an oblation [as the result].

MS III 6,7: 69,13f. havír vái dīksitó. ‘The Dīksita is oblation.’

MS III 6,7: 69,9-11 devátābhyo vā esá médhāyātmānam ālabhate yó dīksate. *badhnīta iva vā etād ātmānaṁ yān mékhalāṁ paryāsyate.*

For the divinities, for the sacrifice, this one [Yajamāna] verily **seizes himself as a sacrificial victim, when he consecrates himself**. He verily just binds himself (as a sacrificial victim) by [the fact] that he ties a girdle (*mékhalā-*) around himself.

The oblation poured into the Āhavanīya goes through the way of this fire towards the gods. In the same manner, the Dīksita leaves this world and goes towards the gods. This means his death on the earth and rebirth in the divine world. Just like the oblation on the midway from the earth to the gods’ world, the one who has just consecrated is found in an intermediate stage between a human and a divine being (→ 4.2.TS^p VI 1,1,5), namely an embryo which is to be born among the gods (or divinities in the ŚB) when the Soma is purchased (or squeezed). The Yajamāna’s transformation to a divine embryo is another aspect of the Dīksā, which is predominant and widespread already in the prose of the Black YV.

4.2. The shaving and bathing: Apsudīksā

The Apsudīksā constitutes the former half of the Dīksā and prepares for its latter half, i.e. the Yajamāna’s transition to an embryo or an oblation (→ 4.1.3. MS III 6,2:61,11-12). It is composed of shaving hair and beard, cutting, bathing, anointing body and eyes, wearing a new garment, purifying with Darbha grass. A series of these acts are the process through which the Yajamāna abandons his essential default as a human being (Manus’s descendant) which is *amedhyá-* ‘unsuitable for the sacrifice’.

With regard to the Apsudīksā, there is an essential difference between the Black and the White YV:

1) A short mantra for the shaving is found in the mantra collections of the Black YV and cited in the prose of the MS, while no mantra appears in the white YV.

2) The unsuitability for the sacrifice (*amedhyá-*) of hair, beard, nail, etc. is due to the material fact that they are dead skin in the prose of the Black YV, while the ŚB remarks the absence of waters (*āpas*) which symbolize truth and faith.

3) The prose of the Black YV explains the necessity of bathing by the myth that the Devas (MS) or the Aṅgiras (KS/TS) had hidden the Dīksā into the waters before they ascended to the heavenly world. For his consecration, the Yajamāna has to take out the Dīksā from the waters; he also has to bring it back into the waters at the Avabhṛtha. The ŚB makes no mention of this myth, but emphasis the putridness of the human being by their telling untruth (*anṛta-*). This is the very cause of unsuitability for the sacrifice of the human being, which needs be purified by waters.

4) The acts of shaving, etc. are expressed only by simple verbs in medium *vapate*, *dhāvate*, *nīkṛntate* in the Black YV, which indicate that originally the Yajamāna shaves by himself his hair

and beard, while a barber (expressed by *nāpitā-* instead of the older *vāptṛ-*) does according to the ŚB and the Śrautasūtras. ŚB describes concretely details of each act. Shaving takes place at an enclosed place on the north side of the sacrificial hall, which differs from the place of shaving closing the Soma ritual as well as that of the Iṣṭis rituals. The ŚB compares also the manner of shaving hair and beard and cutting nails among the Devas and human beings and instructs to follow the unnatural manner of the gods. (For the order of shaving or cutting→ 3.7. ĀpŚS, MānŚS; 3.9.3.TB^p I 5,6,1-3).

MS III 6,2:60,17-61,13 (60,17-61,3) keśaśmaśrú vapate. dató dhāvate. nakhān níkrntate. snāti. mṛtá vā eśá tvág. amedhyāñ vā asyaitád ātmāni sāmalaṃ. tát evāpahate. médhya evá médham úpaity. apsú dīkṣāṃ praveśayitvā devāḥ svargāṃ lokāṃ āyan. yád apsú snāti tām evá dīkṣāṃ ālabhaté. 'tha yád apò 'vabhṛthām abhyavāiti tāñ vā etád dīkṣāṃ púnar apsú praveśayati. ... (61,5-2) devaśrúḍ imān prāvapa iti. devaśrúḍ d hy ètān paravápate. ... (61,11-12) havír vái dīkṣitó. yadā vái havír yājuṣā prokṣāty átha havír bhavati. yád yājuṣā snapáyati havír evāinam akar.

He shaves his hair and beard. He washes his teeth. He cuts his nails. He bathes. These (hair, beard, teeth, nails, body: the subject pronoun *eśá* coincides with the predicate *tvág*) are verily dead skin. This stain on his body verily is not suitable for the sacrifice. He beats it off [as the result]. Being suitable for the sacrifice, he approaches to the sacrifice. **The Devas, verily, went to the heavenly world after having made the Dīkṣā enter into the waters. When he bathes in the waters, he obtains that very Dīkṣā [as the result]. Then, when he goes down to the waters, to the Avabhṛtha ('bringing down'), he makes that Dīkṣā enter again into the waters by this (act) [as the result]. ... [He says:] "I begin to shave (*prāvape*) these (hairs: *keśān*) as the one listening to the gods' (or: as the one of whom the gods hear; *devaśrúḍ-*)"** (MS^m I 2,1). For he begins to shave himself as a devaśrúḍ-. ... **The Dīkṣita is verily an oblation.** As soon as an oblation is sprinkled with water with a Yajus, it becomes then an oblation. **When he (the priest) makes [the Yajamāna] bathe, he has made (aor. *akar*) this one (Yajamāna) even to an oblation [as the result].**

~ KS XXII 13:69,7-9 keśaśmaśrú vapate. nakān níkrntate. dató dhāvate. mṛtām (Mittwede ≠ Ed. Schroeder *amṛtām*) vā etát púrusasyāmedhyām. amedhyām evāpahátya médham úpaity. snāty. āṅgirasah vā 'psú dīkṣāṃ nidhāya suvargāṃ lokāṃ āyan. yát snāti tām ālabhate. ...

He shaves his hair and beard. He cuts his nails. He washes his teeth. These (hair, beard, nails, teeth: the subject pronoun *etát* coincides with the predicate *medhyām*) of a man (*púruṣa-*), verily, are dead, what is unsuitable for the sacrifice. Having beaten off what is unsuitable for the sacrifice, he approaches to the sacrifice. He bathes. **Having laid the Dīkṣā into the waters, the Angiras' went to the heavenly world.** When he bathes, he obtains it (the Dīkṣā).

~ TS^p VI 1,1,2.5. 2. ... keśaśmaśrú vapate nakhāni ní krntate. mṛtá vā eśá tvág amedhyá yát keśaśmaśrú. mṛtām evá tvácām amedhyām apahátya yajñiyó bhūtvā médham úpaity. āṅgirasah suvargāṃ lokāṃ yānto 'psú dīkṣātapāsī praveśayan. apsú snāti. sākṣád evá dīkṣātapāsī áva runddhe....

2. ... He shaves his hair and beard. He cuts his nails. These (hair and beard) verily are dead skin, unsuitable to the sacrifice what is hair and beard. Having beaten off the very dead skin, unsuitable for the sacrifice, having become worthy for the Yajña, he approaches to the sacrifice [as the result]. As the Angiras' went to the heavenly world, they made the Dīkṣā and the Tapas entered into the waters. He bathes in the waters. He, verily before the eyes, corrals the Dīkṣita and Tapas for himself. ...

5. *prácýuto vā eṣò 'smāl lokād ágato devalokām yó dīkṣitās*. 'ntarēva nāvanītaṃ. tasmān nāvanītenābhy-
āṅkte 'nulomām. yājuṣā. vyāvṛtṭyāi.

When one has consecrated oneself, **this one (Dīksita) verily has started from this world, but has not yet attained the world of the gods**. Navanīta (sour cream) is just midway [from Dadhi (sour milk) to Ājya (butter)]. Hence [he] anoints himself with Navanīta in the direction of hairs on the body, with Yajus, for [his] turning away from [this world] toward [the gods' world]. [Cf. Buddhism 「中有」 *antarābhava*-]

ŚB III 1,2,1-10 1. *aparāhñé dīkṣeta*. / *purā keśaśmaśrór vāpanād yát kāmāyeta tād aśnīyād yád vā sampādyeta*. *vratān hy èvāsyātó 'śanam bhāvati*. *yādy u nāśiṣed āpi kāmam nāśnīyāt*. / 2. *athóttareṇa śālām páriśrayanti*. / *tād udakumbhām upanidadhāti*. *tán nāpítá úpatiṣṭhate*. *tát keśaśmaśrú ca vāpate, nakhāni ca níkrntaté*. 'sti vāi *púruṣasyāmedhyām yātrāsyāpo nòpatiṣṭhante*. *keśaśmaśráu ca vā asya nakhēṣu cápo nòpatiṣṭhante*. *tād yát keśaśmaśrú ca vāpate nakhāni ca níkrntaté*, *médhyo bhūtvá dīksā iti*. / 3. *tád dháike / sárva evá vapante*. *sárva evá médhyā bhūtvá dīksisyāmaha iti*. *tád u tátā ná kuryād*. *yád vāi keśaśmaśrú ca vāpate nakhāni ca níkrntaté* *tád evá médhyo bhavati*. *tasmād u keśaśmaśrú caivá vāpeta nakhāni ca níkrnteta*. / 4. *sá vāi nakhāny evāgre níkrntate*. / *dakṣiṇasyaivāgre*. *savyásya vā ágre mānuṣé*. 'thaivāṃ devatrā-. 'ṅgúṣṭhāyor evāgre. *kanīṣṭhikāyor vā ágre mānuṣé*. 'thaivāṃ devatrā. / 5. *sá dáksīṇam evāgre godānam vítārayati*. / *savyām vā ágre mānuṣé*. 'thaivāṃ devatrā. / 6. *sa dáksīṇam evāgre godānam abhyūnatti* / "imá āpaḥ sám u me santu devīr" (VS IV 1) *iti*. *sá yád āhe-* "má āpaḥ sám u me santu devīr" *iti*. *vājro vā āpo, vājro hi vā āpas*. *tasmād yénaitá yānti, nimnāni kurvanti*. *yátropatiṣṭhante nirdahanti*. *tát tād etám evāitád vājraṃ sámayati*. *tátho hainam eṣá vājraḥ sántó ná hinasti*. *tasmād āhe-* "má āpaḥ sám u me santu devīr" *iti*. / 7. *átha darbhataruṇakám antár dadhāti*. / "óṣadhe tráyasv-" (VS IV 1) -*éti*. *vājro vāi kṣurás*. *tátho hainam eṣá vājraḥ kṣuró ná hinasty*. *átha kṣurénābhiniḍadhāti* "svádhte mairāni hirīsīr" (VS IV 1) *iti*. *vājro vāi kṣurás*. *tátho hainam eṣá vājraḥ kṣuró ná hinasti*. / 8. *prachidyodapātré práśyati*. / *tūṣṇīm evóttaram godānam abhyūnatti*, *tūṣṇīm darbhataruṇakám antárdadhāti*. *tūṣṇīm kṣurénābhiniḍhāya prachidyodapātré práśyati*. / 9. *átha nāpítāya kṣurám práyachati*. / *sá keśaśmaśrú vapati*. *sá yadā keśaśmaśrú vāpati*, / 10. *átha snāti*. / *amedhyó vāi púruṣo*. *yád áṇṭam vādati téna pútīr antarató*. *médhyā vā āpo*. *médhyo bhūtvá dīksā iti*. *pavītram vā āpaḥ*. *pavītrapūto dīksā iti*. *tasmād vāi snāti*. /

1. In the afternoon, he (the Yajamāna) should consecrate himself. Before the shaving of hair and beard, he may eat what he may desire, or what he may come across. For only the Vrata-food (i.e. cooked milk twice a day) becomes his meal henceforth. But, if he does not want to eat, he need not to eat, also at will. 2. Then, they enclose the sacrificial hall **on the north**. There, he (the priest) lays down **a water jar** besides. There, **the barber** (*nāpítā*; → 3.4.) attends. There, he (the Yajamāna) shaves his hair and beard and cuts his nails. There verily is what is unsuitable for the sacrifice of a man (*púruṣa*-) at the place where the waters are not at his disposal. In his hair and beard and in his nails, the waters, verily, are not at the disposal. That he shaves his hair and beard and cuts his nails, is [that he thinks:] 'I will consecrate myself (literally: desire to offer myself: subj. *dīksāi*) after having become suitable for the sacrifice'. 3. Thereby, **some namely shave themselves even as a whole (i.e. all over the body)** [thinking:] "Having become suitable for the sacrifice even as a whole, we are going to consecrate ourselves". With this regard, however, **he should not do in this way**. That he shaves his hair and beard and cuts his nails, even by that he becomes suitable for the sacrifice [as the result]. Therefore, he should only shave his hair and beard as well as cuts his nails. 4. He verily cuts even **his nails first**, even of **right (hand or foot) first**. Of left first, verily, among the human beings (*mānuṣá*-). But in the above-mentioned way (: first

those of the right hand or foot) among the Devas. [He cuts his nails] even of **the thumbs or great toes first**. Of the little (fingers or toes) first, verily, among the human beings. But in the above-mentioned way (: first those of the thumbs or great toes) among the Devas. **5.** He (the priest) gets **first even the right beard** (*godāna-*) passed through (by some instrument like porcupine quills as a comb). The left, verily, first among the human beings. But in the above-mentioned way (: first the right beard) among the Devas. **6.** He (the priest) moistens **first even the right beard** (*godāna-*) [saying:] “Let these heavenly waters be now blessing to me” (VS IV 1). When he says “Let these heavenly waters be blessing to me”, — The waters are the Vajra (Indra’s throwing weapon, hence ‘thunderbolt’ in this context, cf. *apām nápāt*). For the waters are verily the Vajra. Therefore, [the place] through which they (the waters) pass, they make [that place] sunk down. [The place] they stand near, they burn out [that place]. — That is, then (*tát tād*) he (the priest) calms (extinguishes) this very Vajra in this way (by this formula). In this way, however, this Vajra, being calmed (extinguished), does not injure him (the Yajamāna). Therefore he says: “Let these heavenly waters be blessing to me.” **7.** Then he (the priest) lays a tender part (sprout) of Darbha grass between [the razor and the beard], saying: “O plant, protect!” (VS IV 1). The razor is verily the Vajra. In this way, however, this Vajra, the razor, does not injure him. Then, he presses [the grass and the beard] by the razor, saying: “O axe, do not injure him!” (VS IV 1). The razor is verily the Vajra. In this way, however, this Vajra, the razor, does not injure [him]. **8.** He (the priest) cuts off [them] and throws [them] off. Even silently (without saying a formula), he moistens the left (*úttara-*) beard. Silently, he lays a tender part (sprout) of Darbha grass between [the razor and the beard]. Silently he presses [them] by a razor and cuts off [them] and throws [them] in the water vessel. **9.** Then, he delivers the razor to the barber. He (the barber) shaves (the Yajamāna’s) hair and beard. As soon as he shaves the hair and beard, **10.** he (the Yajamāna) then bathes. **Unsuitable for the sacrifice, verily, is a man (*púruṣa-*). When he speaks untruth, he is inside putrid by that** (≈ ŚB III 1,3,18 [purification by Darbha grass]; I 1,1,1 [Vratopāyana]). Suitable for the sacrifice, verily, are the waters. [The Yajamāna thinks:] “Having become suitable for the sacrifice, I will consecrate myself (offer myself)”. The waters, verily, are the purifying instrument. [He thinks:] “Purified by the purifying instrument, I will consecrate myself (offer myself). Therefore he bathes.

ĀpŚS X 5,6-7 6. *uttareṇa bahiḥ prāgvamśam pariśrite yajamānaḥ keśaśmaśru vāpayate |*

7. *upapakṣāv agre ’tha śmaśrūṇy atha keśān | api vā śamaśrūṇy upapakṣāv atha keśān |*

6. At the enclosed place on the northern outside of the sacrificial hall which has eastwards orientated beams, the Yajamāna gets his hair and beard shaved. 7. [He gets] first his both armpits hairs [shaved], then beard, then hairs on the head. Or, beard, armpits, then hairs on the head. [For the order of shaving, cf. TB ~ ŚB (Cāturmāsya Nivartana) and ĀpŚS (Darśapūrṇamāsa)]

4.3. Dīkṣita as a member of the gods

The Yajamāna who has consecrated himself is Dīkṣita, a divine embryo, who is already a member of the gods. He is also compared to Indra or Viṣṇu.

KS XXIII 2:74,18f. ... *gārbho dīkṣitó. yónir dīkṣtavimitám. úlbaṃ dīkṣitavásanaṃ. jarāyu kṣṇājīnám. etásmād vái yóner índro ’jāyata. ...*

The Dīkṣita is an embryo. The hall built for the Dīkṣita is his womb. The garment of the Dīkṣita is [his] fetal membrane (*úlba-*). **The skin of the black antelope is [his] placenta (*jarāyu-*). From this womb, verily, Indra was born.**

ŚB III 2,1,16f. *ātha prōṇute | gārbho vā eṣā bhavati yó dīkṣate. prāvṛtā vai gārbhā ūlbeneva jarāyuneva. tásmād vai prōṇute. ||16|| sá prōṇute | viṣṇoḥ śármāsi śárma yájamānasyéty. ubháyaṃ vā eṣó 'tra bhavati yó dīkṣate viṣṇuś ca yájamānaś ca. yád āha dīkṣate tát viṣṇur bhavati. yád yájate tát yájamānas. tásmād āha viṣṇoḥ śármāsi śárma yájamānasyéti ||17||*

Then [Yajamāna] envelops himself. When one consecrates oneself (desires to offer himself), verily this one becomes an embryo. Embryos are verily enveloped by the fetal membrane and the placenta. Therefore he verily envelops himself. 17. This one envelops himself saying: “You are the protection of Viṣṇu. You are the protection of Yajamāna” (VS IV 10). **When one consecrates oneself, this one becomes then the both, Viṣṇu and Yajamāna. When indeed he consecrates himself, then he becomes Viṣṇu.** When he performs a sacrifice for himself, then he becomes Yajamāna. Therefore he says: “You are the protection of Viṣṇu. You are the protection of Yajamāna”.

The priest proclaims to the gods that the Yajamāna has become a Dīkṣita, a member of the gods.

MS III 6,9:762,1f. *dīkṣitò 'yam asā āmūṣyāyaṇāḥ|| ity. ūdvadati vā āha. prīyo vai devānām dīkṣitò. devébhya evāinaṃ prāha.*

“This (man) here, descendant of So-and-So, is consecrated (Dīkṣita)”, thus [the priest says]. He verily raises the voice [and] says. **The consecrated is verily a member (prīya-) of the gods. To the gods indeed, [the priest] pronounces him.**

ŚB III 2,1,39 *athāika ūdvadati / dīkṣitò 'yam brāhmaṇo. dīkṣitò 'yam brāhmaṇa iti. nīveditam evāinaṃ etāt śantaṃ devébhyo nīvedayaty. ayám mahāvīryo yó yajñám prāpad ity. ayám yusmákauko 'bhūt tám gopāyatéty evaitād āha.*

Then one priest raises the voice: ‘this **Brahmin** is consecrated (Dīkṣita). This Brahmin is consecrated (Dīkṣita). [The priest] indeed announces to the gods that this one is here made known: “This one who attained the sacrifice has great manliness”. [The priest says indeed in this way] “**This one has become one of you (the gods).** You shall protect him”.

Cf. ŚB III 2,2,10 = 19 *devān vā eṣā upāvartate yó dīkṣate. sá devātānām éko bhavati.* ‘When one consecrates oneself, verily, this one turns near toward the gods. **He becomes one of divinities**’.

4.4. Purchase of Soma and the Dīkṣita’s birth

When Soma is purchased, the Dīkṣita is born among the gods and unfolds himself. In the ŚB-M III 3,3,10-12, he becomes Indra and the purchased Soma is placed on his thigh, i.e. Indra’s thigh.

TS VI 1,3,2-3 *gārbho vā eṣā yád dīkṣitá. ūlbaṃ vāsaḥ. prōṇute. tásmāt ||2|| gārbhāḥ prāvṛtā jāyante. ná purā sómasya krayād āporṇvīta. yát purā sómasya krayād āporṇvīta gārbhāḥ prajānām parāpātukāḥ syuḥ. kṛtē sómé 'porṇute. jāyata evá tát. átho yáthā vāsīyāmsam pratyaporṇuté tādṛg evá tát.*

When [Yajamāna] is consecrated, he is verily an embryo. [His] garment is [his] fetal membrane. He envelops himself. Therefore, enveloped, embryos are born. He should not unfold himself before the purchase of Soma. If he unfolds himself before [his] purchase of Soma, embryos of his descendants would be those which will fall down [from the womb by miscarriage]. **When the Soma has been purchased, he unfolds himself. He is born by that [as the result]. And then, just as he unfolds himself towards that who is superior [to himself], in that way he [does] by that [as the result].**

MS III 6,7:68,16-69,1 *ājāto* (*ājāto* is also possible because of the sandhi) *vái púruṣaḥ. sá vái yajñénaivá jāyate. sá vái tárhy evá jāyate yárhya adáh some kr̥tē *’porṇutá* (= DHARMADHIKARI; SCHOROEDER *prorṇutá*; MITTWEDE *prorṇutá*). *itō ’gre prorṇutē. ’tho hy ágre púruṣo jāyate. sá vái tárhy evá sárvo jāyate yárhya adō ’pō ’vabhṛthām abhyavāiti. tárhi sá tásmāt sárvo nírṃucyate.*

A man (*púruṣa-*) verily is not born (*ājāto*). **He verily is born by the very Yajña. He verily is born just at that time at which he unfolds himself when the Soma (plant) is bought at that place. Until that time, he envelops himself.** On the other hand namely, a man is born at the beginning. **He verily is born as a complete (*sárva-*) [man] just at that time at which he descends to the waters at that place, to the Avabhṛtha.** At that time, as a complete [man], he releases himself from that (Yajña).

ŚB-M III 3,3,10. ... *tām yajamānasya dakṣiṇā ūrau pratyúhya vāso nidadhātīndrasyorūm āviśa dākṣiṇam ity. eṣā vā atrédro bhavati yád yajamānas. tásmād āhéndrasyorum āviśa dākṣiṇam ity. ...12. athātrāpōrnute. / gárbho vā eṣā bhavati yo dīkṣate. prāvṛtā vai gárbhā ūlvene va jarāyune va. tam ātrāñjanata. tásmād āpōrnuta. eṣā vā ātra gárbho bhavati. tásmāt párivṛto bhavati. párivṛtā iva hi gárbho ūlvene va jarāyune va. /*

10. ... Having carried that (King Soma) on the right thigh of the Yajamāna, having laid down a garment [on the Soma], [he says]: “Seat yourself on Indra’s right thigh!” When the one is a Yajamāna, this one verily becomes Indra at this moment. Therefore he says: “Seat yourself on Indra’s right thigh!” ...12. Then, at this moment, [the Yajamāna] unfolds himself (*apornute*). — When one consecrates himself, this one verily becomes an embryo. Embryos are verily enveloped in fetal membrane and placenta. **[The Dīkṣita] has caused himself (as an embryo) to be born at this time. Therefore he unfolds himself. — This (King Soma) becomes an embryo at this time. Therefore [King Soma] becomes enclosed all around.** For embryos are just fully enveloped in fetal membrane and placenta.

4.5. The final bathing (Avabhṛtha)

At the end of the Soma sacrifice, the Yajamāna and his wife bathe in water and wear their new garment. This rite is called Avabhṛtha ‘bringing down’, which means most probably ‘bringing down the Dīkṣā to the waters (Āpas)’; until the Avabhṛtha, the Yajamāna holds the Dīkṣā, hence he is “Dīkṣita” (→ 4.3. MS^p III 6,7:68,16-69,14). The Avabhṛtha takes place also in the Cāturmāsya, at the end of the Varuṇapraghāsa and at the end of the Mahāhavis of the Sākamedha (→ 3.9.).

4.6. The final shaving in the Maitravaruṇīya rite

To close the Soma sacrifice, a supplementary animal sacrifice named Maitrāvaruṇī Vaśā “Barren cow for Mitra and Varuṇa” takes place after the Avabhṛtha. At the end of this sacrifice, Yajamāna shaves his hair and beard without mantra on the southern end of the altar (*vedi-*). This shaving is not referred to in the brāhmaṇas, but treated in the Śrautasūtras from the BaudhŚS VIII 21 onward:

BaudhŚS VIII 21 *tasyai prasiddham vapayā caritvā dakṣiṇe vedyante keśaśmaśru vapate nakhāni nikṛntate. sarvasaṁsthām paśoḥ kurvanti. |* ‘After having accomplished [the offering] of the greater omentum, [the Yajamāna] shaves his hair and beard and cuts his nails **on the southern end of the altar (vedi-)**. [The priest and Yajamāna] do complete conclusion of the animal sacrifice.’

ĀpŚS XIII 23,16 *anūbandhyāvapāyāṃ hutāyāṃ dakṣiṇe vedyante yajamānaḥ keśaśmaśru vāpayate.* ‘After the greater omentum of the Anūbandhyā (“to be tied to the post”) cow was offered, on the southern end of the altar (*vedi-*), the Yajamāna gets his hair and beard shaved (caus. *vāpayate*).’

4.7. Keśavapanīya of the Rājasūya

The Rājasūya is a large-scale complex ritual composed of a series of Soma sacrifices. Its climax is the Abhiṣeka ‘sprinkling with water for coronation’ accompanied by the Daśapeya. Afterwards the king (Yajamāna) observes his Vratas (pl.), such as letting his hair, beard and nails grow long, not walking on the earth, etc., for one year (Kāty, Āp, Hir, Vaārāha, Lāty) or twelve days (BaudhŚS). Then he performs a Soma sacrifice named Keśvapanīya ‘Hair-shaving Festival’, which substantially concludes the Rājasūya. The king is considered to ascend to the heavenly world by Abhiṣeka and to stay there during he observes the above-mentioned Vratas. If this state continues, he dies on the earth or becomes insane. In order to descend again to this world, he has to perform the Keśavapanīya (called Mr̥tyusava in the BaudhŚS XVIII 16-19), in which he gets his hair shaved, later cut short in the Nivartana manner of the Cāturmāsya, due to the tendency to avoid a hairless head (cf. SB V 5,3,1-7).

Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa XVIII 10,10 *yad vai rājasūyenābhiṣicyate, tat svargaṃ lokam ārohati. sa yad imaṃ lokam nopāvarohed, atijanaṃ vā gacched ud vā mādye. yad eṣo `rvācīnastomaḥ keśavapanīyo bhavaty asya lokasyānuddhānāya, yathā śākhāyāḥ śākhām ālambham upāvarohed, evam etenemaṃ lokam upāvarohati pratiṣṭhāyai.* // ‘When [the king who is Yajamāna] gets his head sprinkled with water for coronation, then he ascends to the heavenly world. If he does not descend near this world, he would go (opt.) beyond the foreign land (atijanaṃ) or be made insane. If this Keśavapanīya which has reversed Stoma is performed for not banishing [him] from this world, just as, grasping one branch after another, he descends near, by this (Keśavapanīya) he descends near to this world in order to stand solidly.

From the general scheme of ritual treatment of hair and beard, we may assume that the Keśavapanīya was originally a shaving rite closing a simple Soma ritual for coronation of a king. This shaving rite developed into an independent Soma ritual in the process of composing the Rājasūya.

[Cf. an opposite assumption made by Heesterman, The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration (1957) p. 219: “it (Keśavapanīya) originally have been a full-fledged royal consecration (Rājābhiṣeka) which consequently was to be followed by yet another dīkṣā-like period and so forth” in “an unending sequence” of “dīkṣā year – unction - dīkṣā year”.]

4.8. Sattrā

The Sattrā differs in essence from other rituals called ‘yajñā-’, though it is classified into the Soma rituals. The participants are all Brahmins; the Yajamāna and the priests are not distinguished. By the Dīkṣā of the Sattrā, all hairs on the head including the Śikhā should be shaved:

ApŚS XXI 13,4 *sattram ced vapanakāle saśikhāni vapante* ‘If [the ritual to be performed is] the Sattrā, [the participants] shave their hair and beard including the Śikhā (, i.e. all hairs on the head).’

The Sattrā is supposed to have been a kind of “a Veda workshop” with drinking of Soma sap and to be closely related with activities of Ṛṣi, Muni, Brahmacārin (→ 2.2., 3.5. Keśin) and Śramaṇas. This subject will be discussed on another occasion.